

TOWN OF AMHERST
WAYFINDING SIGNAGE PLAN
FINAL 10/13/2016

Compiled by the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Town of Amherst

Introduction

The Town of Amherst lies at the intersection of U.S. 60 and U.S. 29 in the center of Amherst County. Lynchburg is fifteen miles to the south, Charlottesville is fifty-two miles to the north, and Sweet Briar College lies three miles to the south of downtown. Because of its role as the seat of government for Amherst County, the Town hosts daily visitors from other localities who are conducting business with the court system or other county services. Downtown Amherst is approximately three miles north of the central campus of Sweet Briar College, and students, parents, and other college visitors frequent shopping, dining, and services in Amherst.

Both the 2007 “Downtown Restructuring Plan & Physical Improvement Strategy” by Arnett Muldrow and Associates and the 2012 “Greater Lynchburg Wayfinding Signage Study” by the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization (CVMPO or MPO) (see Appendix I) recommended the development of a Wayfinding signage program in the Town of Amherst.

Other than a few pilot projects (including Loudoun County and the “Historic Triangle” of Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Jamestown), VDOT has not yet issued blanket approval or guidelines for the installation of branded community-specific wayfinding signs on VDOT right-of-way. Exceptions to this include localities that maintain their own roadways, including Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and Winchester. These jurisdictions may install wayfinding systems in consultation with VDOT. Some smaller localities in the area (including the Towns of Altavista, Bedford, and Brookneal and the County of Appomattox) have recently installed wayfinding systems, but the degree of collaboration with VDOT (and subsequent approval by the agency of the project) varied on a case-by-case basis.

This plan was developed in anticipation of the future development and approval by VDOT of statewide community wayfinding signage guidelines. Any wayfinding signs should conform to the Federal Highway Administration’s Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (see Appendix I) or the VDOT equivalent.

Goals of a wayfinding signage system

- Creating a more welcoming community
- Directing visitors and locals to key destinations in a safer and more efficient manner
- Reinforcing community identity and branding

- Bolstering economic development in the community

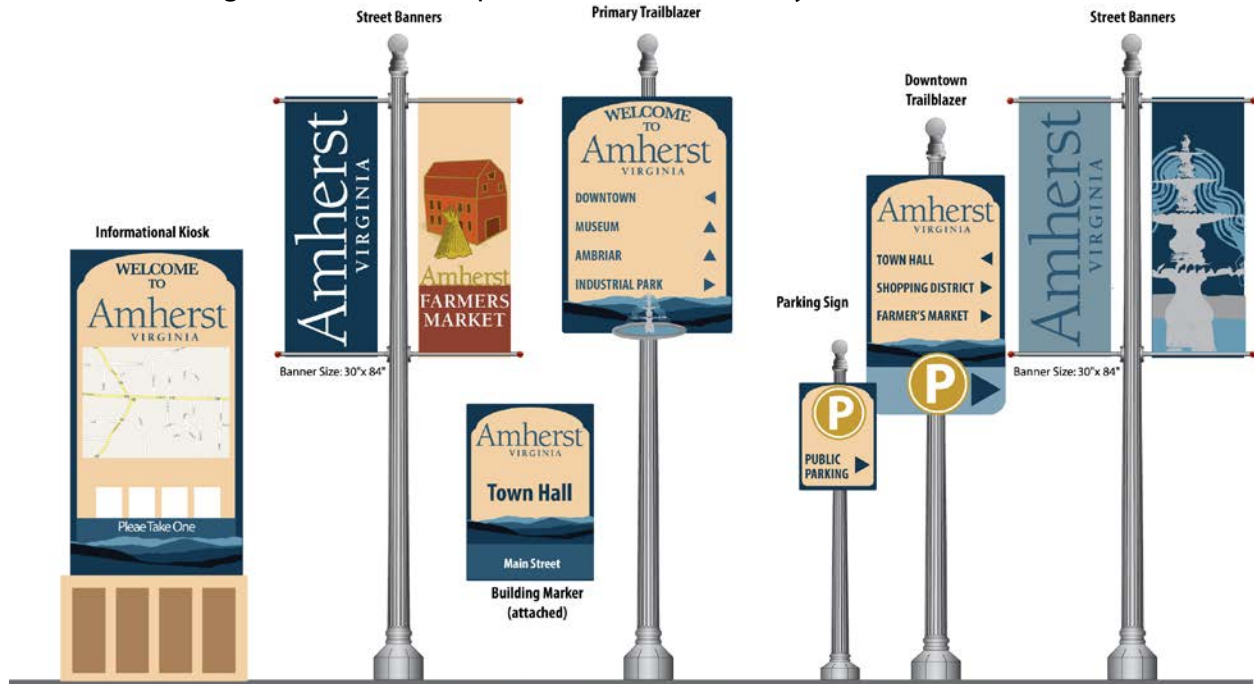


Figure)- While not MUTCD-compliant, this array of wayfinding signage proposed in the 2007 Arnett Muldrow plan offers a sound starting point for future designs.

Types of Wayfinding Signs

- **Highway Signage:** VDOT standards allow "Supplemental Guide Signs" for cultural interest area destinations within fifteen miles of an interstate highway. Design of these signs complies with the federal MUTCD standards.
- **Gateway Signs:** Signs and structures distinguishing town edges or entry portals. The design of these signs should be complementary to a comprehensive wayfinding system so that motorists are immediately introduced to the scheme, color, and format of the larger wayfinding system that they will soon be experiencing.



- **Vehicular Directional Signage:** Signs serving to direct vehicular traffic to key destinations within and beyond the town. They are typically placed approximately 100 feet in advance of key "decision points" where motorists will need to make a turn. "Trailblazer" signs are used to re-assure motorists as they travel along their intended path if the distance between decision points is significant.
- **Parking Signage:** Identification and directional signs for parking, which help make facilities easier to locate. Consistent and frequent parking signage helps direct visitors to off-street facilities, and helps diminish the perception that parking is scarce. Parking regulation signs such as these can also be integrated with a branded wayfinding system to help convey a consistent message in downtown areas.
- **Pedestrian Directional Signage:** Signs and maps intended to orient and direct individuals on foot throughout commercial or residential districts. Information kiosks may also be included in this signage family.



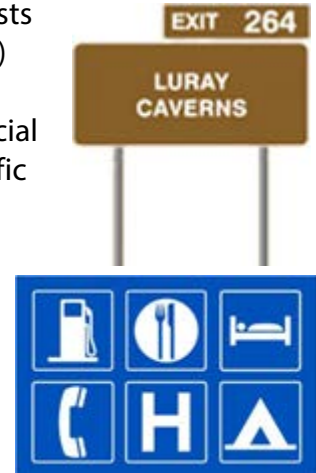
The U.S. 29 Bypass, a limited access highway, runs in a north-south direction through the eastern portion of the Town of Amherst. VDOT's Integrated Directional Signage Program (IDSP) (see Appendix I) regulates messaging along limited access highways and the on/off ramps that serve them. In Virginia, this program is administered by Interstate Logos, LLC (known as Virginia Logos) in partnership with VDOT (see Appendix I). Four main types of signs or signage programs are included in the IDSP:



- **Specific Travel Service (Logo) Signs:** provide the motorist directional guidance to providers of gas, food, lodging, camping, and attraction destinations at interchanges along Virginia's Interstates and other controlled-access roadways.
- **Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS):** TODS signs provide roadway users with directional guidance to business, service, and activity facilities available to them during their travels along non-limited access routes and highways. Regulations controlling TODS signs include:
 - Excluded from any cities and towns of 5,000 or more in population (as well as Arlington County and Henrico County).



- Derives a major portion of income or visitors from motorists not residing in the area of the facility (within fifteen miles) during the normal business season.
- **Supplemental Guide Signs:** VDOT allows the installation of official guide signs displaying information about destinations and specific facilities that are of significance to travelers.
- **General Motorist Service Signs:** General Motorist Service Signs use symbols to inform the motorist of the availability of services that fulfill the needs of the road user such as gas, food, lodging, camping, or hospitals.



Naturally, an effective wayfinding system may be developed through careful coordination of a combination IDSP sign types. However, a branded community-specific wayfinding system can be more effective at developing a visitor’s interest in a locality, and thus increasing the length of time they spend exploring the area. Community-specific wayfinding systems signal to a visitor that a place is special and is worthy of their attention.

IDSP signs exist within the Town of Amherst (particularly along U.S. 60 and U.S. 29 business). In some cases, these signs may be replaced by community-specific signs. Along the U.S. 29 Bypass (and its access ramps), IDSP signs are required and community-specific signs are prohibited. It is critical that these two systems be “woven” together in order to give visitors a seamless experience.

Inclusion Criteria

A comprehensive listing of recommended criteria for inclusion in Wayfinding signage systems throughout the Central Virginia MPO may be found on pages 30-33 of the “Greater Lynchburg Wayfinding Study.” The following is a condensed listing of those guidelines. While the Town of Amherst is not required to adhere to these guidelines, signage inclusion policies within the town should follow accepted best practices.

An attraction will be eligible to participate in this program if it is open to the general public, if a substantial portion of its products or services are of significant interest to tourists, and if it meets the following criteria:

- Shall have the name of the attraction prominently displayed on the premises in such a manner that it is readily visible to motorists from the public roadway on which the facility is located.
- Shall be open a minimum of four (4) hours, five (5) days a week during at least six (6) months each year, except this requirement shall not apply to certain facilities such as arenas, auditoriums, civic centers, farmers markets, farm markets, and flea markets. This requirement may be waived if the attraction property is open to the public when

the primary facility is closed if visitors can experience the attraction via unstaffed information kiosks or interpretive signage.

- Attraction must be a non-profit (as defined by the Internal Revenue Service) or publicly-owned. Note: Prior to implementation of a future wayfinding project, it is recommended that this requirement be revisited. As currently written, privately-owned facilities such as wineries, breweries, orchards, and resorts would not be eligible for listing within the system (although any of these types of facilities could participate in Virginia Logos' TODS program). A legal review should be conducted to determine the appropriateness (or lack thereof) of privately-owned facilities appearing on a community wayfinding system, particularly due to inconsistencies between relevant policies and codes at the local and state level (i.e. VDOT offsite signage regulations)

Proposed Destinations

Description of Ranking Levels

- **Level 1** - Destination of primary importance; provide direction throughout town via all access routes on vehicular signs.
- **Level 2** - Major destination; consider for advance strategic wayfinding on vehicular signs within overall circulation strategy.
- **Level 3** - Minor destination, or exclusively civic destination; vehicular wayfinding provided if "hard to find" (e.g. on a side street).
- **Level 4** - Minor destination or exclusively civic destination; vehicular directional wayfinding not needed.

Level 1 ★

Ambriar Business District
Historic Downtown Amherst
Sweet Briar College
Visitor Center

Level 2 ★

Amherst County Court House
Amherst County High School

Level 3 ★

Amherst Cemetery
Amherst County Administration Building
Amherst County Historical Society & Museum
Amherst County Public Library
Arts Center/Farmers Market
Amherst Town Hall

Brockman Park
Traffic Circle
Zane Snead Industrial Park

Level 4 ★
None identified

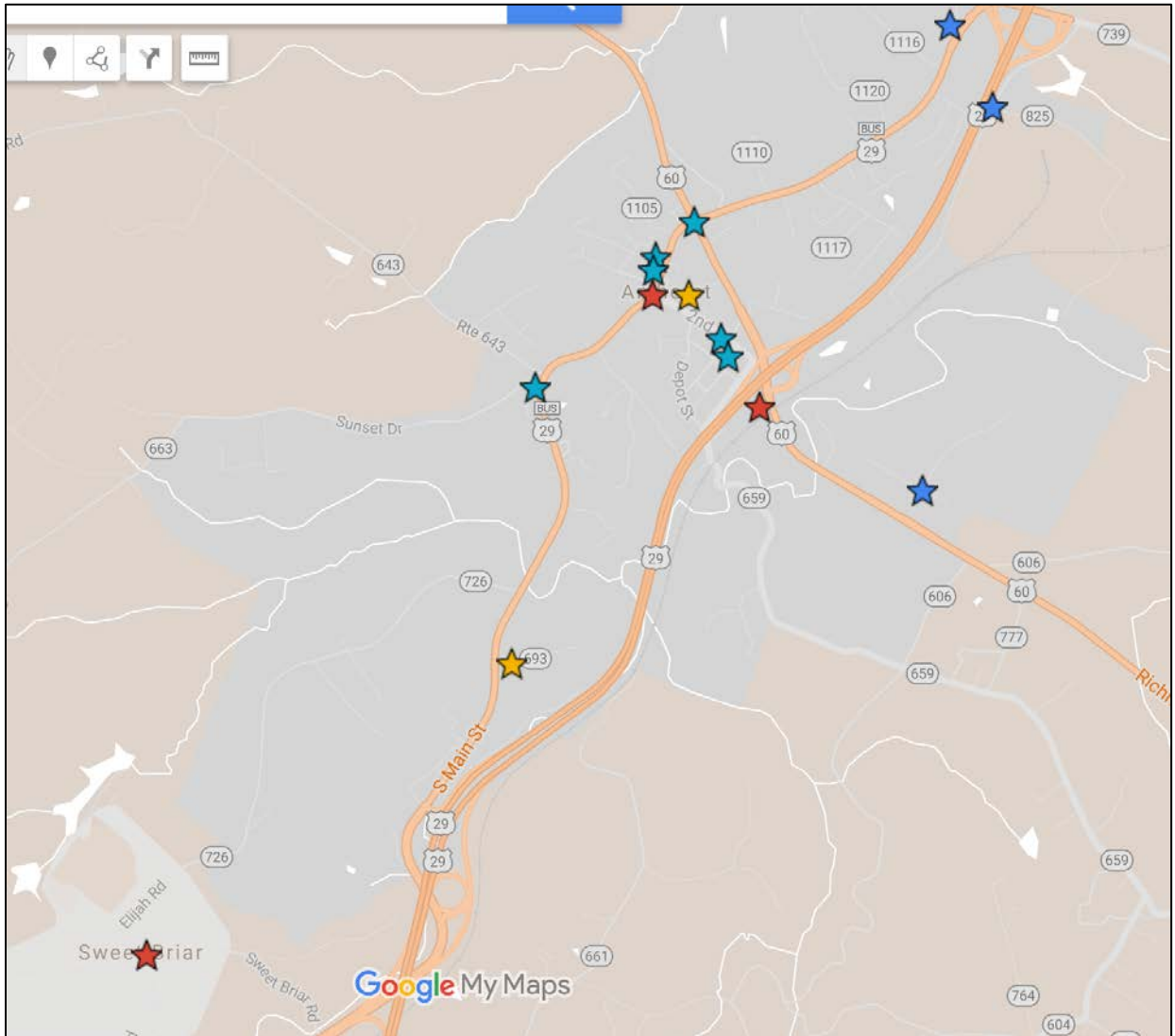


Figure 1- Map showing proposed Amherst wayfinding signage system destinations. The color of the star relates to the level of the destination (described on previous page).

Signage Specifications

The following design standards are intended to provide guidance to graphic designers and planners working on the implementation of a future wayfinding system within the Town of Amherst. These principles are based on best practices generally followed by wayfinding signage designers who use the following sources as reference:

- MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices), 2009
- ADAAG (ADA Accessibility Guidelines) D2004
- ANSI (American National Standards Institute) A117.1, 1995
- IBC (International Building Code), 2003
- SEG D (Society for Environmental Graphic Design) ADA, White Paper, 2006

Standards Common to all Signs

- Rectangular in shape
- White lettering
- Abbreviations should be kept to a minimum
- Lettering for destinations is a combination of lower and upper-case letters
- Lettering for all other messages (PARKING, ENTERING, LEAVING, etc.) is all upper-case
- Groups of destinations within the same direction should be separated from those in other directions by a contrasting horizontal line
- All text, borders, and backgrounds are retroreflective
- Sign panel borders should be white and retroreflective
- Arrows should be MUTCD-compliant, white, and retroreflective
- Background material: 3MTM 3930 High Intensity Prismatic reflective sheeting
- Recommended substrate: .100 gauge aluminum panel
- Posts: Quickpunch or perforated (Telespar or equivalent) metal posts, coated black. Secondary option would be pressure-treated wood posts (preferably painted black or white). Post size and quantity dependent on sign panel size.
- Footer: Break-away design as detailed in VDOT Road & Bridge Manual
- Substrate (sign panels), posts, and footers must comply with VDOT wind load specifications

Speed Limit < 25 MPH

- Maximum of Four Destinations
- Typeface: Clearview Highway (or current standard) 4" letter height

Speed Limit > 25 MPH

- Maximum of Three Destinations
- Typeface: Clearview Highway (or current standard) 5" letter height

Manufacturer Selection

When seeking a company to manufacture MUTCD-compliant signs, it is important to ensure that the firm has experience producing highway-grade signage. Many companies claim to be able to produce such products, but are not, for example, able to offer custom colors of

background sheeting with a reasonable warranty. All materials must be installed according to processes recommended by the material manufacturer.

Color and contrast are important factors to effectively communicate messages on wayfinding signs. Contrast between the foreground and background is one of the most important factors for ease of reading. If colored text is used on a bright background, the contrast will be weak; white text against dark colored backgrounds provide optimal results. In designing wayfinding signs, color is the most important factor in harmonizing the sign with the environment. Because white letters are required by the MUTCD, it is important to select a background color that provides adequate contrast.

It is recommended that the Town of Amherst wayfinding signage program, if implemented, follows the town's branding standards. In 2007, the Town of Amherst and Arnett-Muldrow & Associates created a logo for the community that features the iconic fountain in the traffic circle with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background. Wayfinding signage within the Town of Amherst should reflect the graphic elements and color palette of this logo, or the current branding scheme in effect.



Appendix I. Reference Documents and Locations

Amherst Town Development Area Study

<http://amherstva.gov/wp-content/uploads/home/Amherst-Urban-Development-Area-study-report-3-June-2016.pdf>

Downtown [Amherst] Restructuring Plan & Physical Improvement Strategy (2007)

On file at Amherst Town Office

Evaluation of the Historic Triangle Wayfinding Sign System

<http://vtrc.virginiadot.org/PubDetails.aspx?PubNo=09-R12>

FHWA Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices

<http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>

Greater Lynchburg Wayfinding Signage Study (June 2012)

<http://www.localgovernmentcouncil.org/transportation-studies.html>

Town of Amherst Code & Zoning Ordinance

<http://amherstva.gov/departments/mayor-town-council/town-code/>

VDOT Integrated Directional Signing Program

<http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/sign-default.asp>

VDOT/Virginia Logos

<http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/sign-default.asp#logos>

VDOT Off-Site/Outdoor Advertising & State Right-of-Way

http://www.virginiadot.org/info/outdoor_advertising_and_the_state_right_of_way.asp

Appendix II. Proposed Signs and Text

Signs are identified in a three-part system. The first portion of the identifier specifies the size of the sign (A for greater than 25 mph speed limit, B for 25 mph or less). The second portion designates the direction of travel from which the sign can be seen by motorists (and thus specifies which side of the roadway the sign is installed). The third portion is a sequential number identifying each unique sign.

Sign locations must be field verified for sight distance, offset from asphalt, right-of-way, utility, and other factors.

Sign wording and quantity will need to be reviewed and refined prior to implementation.

An interactive Google Map showing destination and sign locations may be found here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tHKHxnVcgEvJdrM9_XnxU2xyUr8&usp=sharing

Traffic circles (or roundabouts) pose unique challenges for wayfinding signage systems. Signs leading into Amherst's traffic circle must be simple and clear. One example of a wayfinding sign leading into a traffic circle is shown below (disregard the yellow background color).



Sign Identifier	Location	Text
A-N-01	NB Main St at Ambriar	Historic Downtown (straight) High School (straight)
A-S-02	SB Main St N of Ambriar	Sweet Briar College (straight)
A-N-03	NB Main St S of Lancer Lane	Historic Downtown (straight) High School (right)
A-S-04	SB Main St N of Lancer Lane	Ambriar District (straight) Sweet Briar College (straight) High School (left)
B-N-05	NB Main St S of Library	Historic Downtown (straight) Court House (straight) Library (left)
B-S-06	SB Main St N of Library	Ambriar District (straight) Sweet Briar College (straight) Library (right)
B-N-07	NB Main St S of Second St	Museum (straight) Court House (right) Arts Center (right) Farmers Market (right)
B-W-08	WB Second St E of Main St	Museum (right) Ambriar District (left) Sweet Briar College (left)
B-S-09	SB Main St N of Second St	Sweet Briar College (straight) Court House (left) Arts Center (left) Farmers Market (left)
B-N-10	NB Main St S of Museum	Museum (left) Traffic Circle (straight)
B-S-11	SB Main Street N of Museum	Museum (right) Sweet Briar College (straight) Court House (straight)
B-N-12	NB Main St S of Circle	Amherst Cemetery (straight roundabout) Blue Ridge Parkway (left roundabout) Visitor Center (right roundabout)
B-S-13	SB Main St N of Circle	Blue Ridge Parkway (right roundabout) Historic Downtown (straight roundabout) Sweet Briar College (straight roundabout) Visitor Center (left roundabout)
A-E-14	EB 60 W of Circle	Historic Downtown (right roundabout) Sweet Briar College (right roundabout) Court House (right roundabout) Visitor Center (straight roundabout)

A-W-15	WB 60 E of Circle	Blue Ridge Parkway (straight roundabout) Historic Downtown (left roundabout) Sweet Briar College (left roundabout) Amherst Cemetery (right roundabout)
A-W-16	WB 60 E of CH Access Road	Court House (left) Historic Downtown (straight)
B-E-17	EB Second St W of Taylor? St	Court House (left) Arts Center (straight) Farmers Market (straight) County Administration (straight)
B-E-18	EB Second St W of Washington	Arts Center (right) Farmers Market (right) County Administration (right)
B-S-19	SB Washington St N of Second St	County Administration (straight)
A-W-20	WB US 60 E of Washington St	Historic Downtown (straight) Court House (straight) County Administration (left)
B-E-21	Visitor Center Driveway	Historic Downtown (left) Sweet Briar College (left)